

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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Carbon Monoxide Poisoning in Your Home

Wind and rain will be moving into Washington this weekend and bringing with it the possibility of power outages. The Office of the State Fire Marshal would like to remind everyone to be aware of household items that produce carbon monoxide. "Protect your family from this silent killer by ensuring you are familiar with the risks associated with carbon monoxide and methods for reducing the risk within your home," says State Fire Marshal Michael Matlick.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a toxic gas created as a result of incomplete combustion. There are several sources within the home that generate CO including gas-fired appliances, charcoal grills, wood-burning furnaces or fireplaces, and motor vehicles. CO fumes are odorless and colorless creating a potential danger to residential occupants. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 480 people die and another 15,200 are treated annually throughout the United States for CO exposure or poisoning.

Since CO fumes can not be seen, smelled, or tasted, they can cause illness or death without notice. When CO is breathed in at lower levels, the effects may be mistaken for flu-like symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, disorientation, nausea, and fatigue. The length of exposure and overall health of the individual being exposed can cause symptoms to vary.

The following safety tips are recommended:

- Install listed carbon monoxide alarms with audible warning signal near the sleeping area and outside individual bedrooms. CO alarms are designed to sound an alarm before the average, healthy adult would experience symptoms.
- Annually have a qualified professional inspect fuel burning appliances, furnaces, venting, and chimney systems.

- Never use cooking ranges or ovens in place of central heating.
- Never use charcoal grills, hibachis, or generators inside homes.
- Never leave cars running in a garage. Dangerous buildup of CO can still occur with garage doors open.

If a CO detector alarms, the following steps are recommended:

If no one is feeling ill:

1. Silence the alarm.
2. Turn off all appliances and sources of combustion (i.e. furnace and fireplace).
3. Ventilate the house with fresh air by opening doors and windows.
4. Call a qualified professional to investigate the source of the possible CO buildup.
5. Consult with your doctor.

If illness is a factor:

1. Evacuate all occupants immediately.
2. Determine how many occupants are ill and determine their symptoms.
3. Call your local emergency number and when relaying information to the dispatcher, include the number of people feeling ill.
4. Do not re-enter the home without the approval of a fire department representative.
5. Call a qualified professional to repair the source of the CO.

Additional information related to carbon monoxide may be found on the United States Fire Administration's web site at www.usfa.dhs.gov or the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's web site at www.cdc.gov.

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The Office of the State Fire Marshal is a Bureau of the Washington State Patrol, providing fire and life safety services to the citizens of Washington State including inspections of state licensed facilities, plan review of school construction projects, licensing of fire sprinkler contractors and pyrotechnic operators, training Washington State's firefighters, and collecting emergency response data.

PREVENT FIRES
IT'S YOUR JOB!